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Lucia A Keegan 08/29/2006 03:28:04 PM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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UNCLAS PARIS 05764

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ACTION: UNESCO
INFO: POL ECON AMBU AMB AMBO DCM SCI

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 005764

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FROM USMISSION TO UNESCO PARIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: UNESCO: DISCUSSION OF WORLD DIGITAL LIBRARY WITH UNESCO
AMBASSADORS

¶11. (U) SUMMARY. On Wednesday June 21, Ambassador Oliver hosted a luncheon with selected UNESCO Ambassadors for John Van Oudenaren of the Library of Congress (LOC) to introduce the concept of the World Digital Library (WDL). With Van Oudenaren, the Ambassadors discussed the possibilities of the WDL for the developing world, what materials would be included on the WDL, and the issue of intellectual property rights. Participants included the Ambassadors from the Netherlands, Russia, South Korea, South Africa, Senegal, and India. END SUMMARY.

THE WDL AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE:

¶12. (SBU) The Senegalese Ambassador spoke of the problem of the digital divide between the developed and the developing worlds. Villages in Senegal did not have electricity, let alone the Internet, he said, and the country lacked libraries and universities. On that note, the Ambassador informed the group that China would be helping Senegal to build a national library. He then spoke of how UNESCO can help Africa address these challenges, emphasizing that UNESCO could be a catalyst in the WDL project. The Dutch Ambassador asked how the WDL would benefit the developing world.

¶13. (SBU) Van Oudenaren stated that the Librarian of Congress, James Billington was committed to putting materials from the developing world on the WDL. Van Oudenaren added that developing countries would be able to keep the digital equipment used for putting their materials on the WDL. In response to the Senegalese Ambassador, Van Oudenaren reiterated that the WDL focuses on

digitizing materials, not on the digital divide.

CONTENT: WHAT WILL BE PUT ON THE WDL?

¶15. (SBU) The Dutch Ambassador asked if the main issue with the WDL was the hardware or the content, and how the LOC planned on deciding which materials to display on the WDL. Van Oudenaren explained that the site would have four entry points: simple search, search by geography, format, or institution. The South Korean and Russian Ambassadors both noted that their countries had a lot of materials that they would like to show and repeated the Dutch question about choosing content. In response, Van Oudenaren said that the WDL would not put collections of large manuscripts online, though he could not give a hard and fast rule about content, other than it probably was better to err on the side of too much rather than too little. The Dutch Ambassador later noted to the Mission that although the WDL was a great idea, it seemed like if the content was not narrowed, it would be taking on too much.

PROPERTY RIGHTS:

¶16. (SBU) The South African Ambassador, noting that many materials on her continent were in private hands due to the lack of good public facilities, asked Van Oudenaren how the WDL would deal with property rights and digitization. Van Oudenaren responded by saying that the WDL would follow the intellectual property laws of the host country. He added that the WDL includes technical safeguards: the owner of the material would receive the highest resolution image. The image on the WDL would be of a lesser quality. This would not affect the quality of the image for the WDL user, but it would be impossible for anyone to download a publication-quality image of the material from the Internet.

RUSSIA: DIVERSITY AND UNITY:

¶17. (SBU) While the Indian Ambassador was interested in the issue of national intellectual property law, the Russian Ambassador asked if the discussion of it was important, saying that the WDL gave the possibility of unifying the whole world's cultures on line. He said he would pitch the WDL to the Russian First Lady, Lyudmila Putina. He then went on to ask how the WDL would preserve diversity while pursuing a unifying theme. (COMMENT: He seemed to be dancing around the question of how content would be chosen (the unifying theme) and made diverse at the same time. END COMMENT.) He stated that the WDL could help counter dissatisfaction among minority groups, saying that by allowing these groups a window onto the world, the WDL might help stop aggressive rebellion. He used the Northern Caucasus as an example.

¶18. (SBU) The Russian Ambassador also stated that UNESCO engagement on the World Digital Library could improve the "crisis" of the Communication and Information Sector, adding that he saw no real output from the sector and regularly raised the need to improve the sector with the Director General.

¶19. (SBU) COMMENT: UNESCO Ambassadors warmly received the project, but are hungry for more specifics. While some worry that the project might be too big to succeed, others might worry that the project might be too big to control in a more political sense. It will be essential to keep UNESCO Ambassadors informed of the project as we move ahead in order to secure their long-term support. END COMMENT.

OLIVER